



Adolescents' Career Decision Making: A Qualitative Study

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study was to investigate the factors influencing career decision making of adolescents at higher secondary level of education. A qualitative inquiry was done using grounded theory method that aimed at developing a career decisions theory which is indigenous to Pakistani culture and society. Sample consisted of adolescents studying at higher secondary level of education in different schools and colleges of Lahore, Pakistan. Semi structured interview schedule was used to collect the data. Telephonic interviews were conducted. A combination of purposive, snowball and convenience sampling strategies was employed for data collection. A total fifty interviews were conducted and based upon the richness of the data provided; fourteen interviews were selected for further analysis. The results show that "scope", family influences, influence of institution, peer influences, planning, gender, knowledge about ones' self, beliefs, need for change, finances, command on subject matter, looking towards future, market value, international and local system of education and preconceived notions about fields are the factors that influence career decisions of adolescents in Pakistan. Implications in both basic and applied areas of research were discussed.

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1. Introduction

In a region like South Asia, men are more encouraged to become doctors, engineers, pilots, accountants, army and policemen; whereas females are more encouraged in fields of nursing, teaching and health. Career choices of women have been greatly influenced by cultural norms regarding the acceptability of women entering non-traditional careers. Agarwal (1991) in a study on south Asian immigrants revealed that over half of her study sample, parents wanted their children, both males and females to become physicians. The study also pointed out the management of dual role expectations as dutiful daughters in the family as well as assertive and achieving high on educational grounds. Gender role expectations within the family are a strong influencing factor in choice of career especially for females.

Some decades ago, studies on career aspirations revealed that females had more restricted career opportunities and narrower range of possible occupational choices (Looft, 1971). Heins, Hendricks, and Martindale (1982) reported that educational and career aspirations and achievements of boys were more encouraged than girls. Thus female child learns at an early age about their possible career options by reflecting upon the societal sex role expectations (Looft, 1971).

Similar studies were replicated in 1980s, it was observed that girls had slighter broader career aspirations than in the past but remained considerably lower than males (Wahl & Blackhurst, 2000). From then onwards, females were seen choosing broader careers and having flexible career options.

Barriers to career are those factors that restrain the achievement of career goals (Crites, 1969). These barriers can be internal, like low self-esteem, lack of confidence, lack of motivation; a motivation. External barriers to one's career may include lack of resources, financial problems and deficiencies. Whether external or internal, barriers do influence a person's career in a great way.

At the intermediate level, students may face barriers like, lack of finances to get into a good college or university, lack of proper coaching and career counseling can add further to the trouble and confusion faced by the students. To majority of parents, it is unsafe for the girls, to travel long distances to reach schools, colleges and universities, as it may risk many girls to sexual abuse. As a result, we see high dropout rate for girls after primary education.

Social support is crucial at each and every stage of life because it determines how well a person is going to cope with the harsh circumstances. According to House and Wells (1978), people may be said to have social support is described a relationship with one or two persons on whom they can rely on and have positive feelings towards them. These persons are perceived to be able and willing to provide emotional and/ or instrumental assistance in times of need.

Social support increases the likelihood of academic achievement (Levitt, Guacci-Franco, & Levitt, 1993). Social support from the family directly impacts the child's experiences at school. Students who have high social support from family, show high scholastic self-esteem at school (Dubow & Ullman, 1989). Women education has received immense encouragement and support from all areas of society in the past few years. People now are confident enough to send their children, particularly their daughters to schools and colleges and thus help them out as they help and support their sons.

In South Asian region, career decisions are often taken collectively rather than individually. Parents, older siblings and relatives play an important part in forming one's career and deciding upon what career the child should pursue. There are sometimes pressures from these circles to go into specific fields like medicine and engineering. In some rare cases, children are given free hand on taking their career decisions but due to lack of proper guidance at schools, they lose sight of the ultimate career they want to pursue and thus become confused.

Career decision making does not take place in isolation. Social learning theory of career decision making is enrooted in social learning theory developed by Bandura. Social learning theory of career decision making was proposed by Jones, Krumboltz, and Mitchell (1979). It was solely designed to address questions like why do people choose specific careers they choose to enter, why they may switch their majors at particular times in their careers and what are the reasons behind specific vocational preferences. This theory examines the impact of factors like, genetic endowments, traits and special abilities, sociological, cultural and economic conditions, number and nature of available job and training opportunities, cultural values and rewards for some occupations and not others. Technological developments, educational experiences and community influences, performance responses and skills also affect career decision making process.

The development of an individual's career preferences takes place by his or her past learning experiences. These learning experiences can either be taken up through associative or instrumental learning. When learning takes place through association, the individual clearly perceives the connection between particular stimuli in a particular environment. Vicarious learning; learning through modeling is also a kind of associative learning. When the individual reads, hears and observes people in particular occupations, he or she makes certain connections in occupational stereotypes. These occupational stereotypes are important determinant in career decision making.

According to social learning theory of career decision making, interests are those linking chains that link the original causal learning experience with the subsequent choices and decisions one make in his or her career. These may prove to be more or less accurate but self-observation generalizations are important predictor of future behaviors regarding career.

Thus social learning theory of career decision making holds that individuals do not only inherit genetic traits and abilities but also social characteristics that are brought into career decision making process. Career decision making must be understood in the context of a person's interests, abilities and family environment and culture.

1.1 Rationale

Career decisions are one of the most important decisions of one's life. The very first career decision that we all encounter with are at the higher secondary level. It is the stage when adolescents often have an idea about possible options, their own abilities, strengths, weaknesses and values. Due to lack of career counseling and guidance, despite of knowing about possible career options there are chances of getting distracted while taking this crucial decision. If one enters a wrong field, he or she will be stuck there all their life and the result will be frustration, disappointment and lack of satisfaction from one's own self as well as from his or her job. In a society like Pakistan, where decisions are made collectively it is important to look what factors affect career decision making and how this whole process works specifically in Pakistani society. This study aims to highlight the factors that influence career decision making of adolescents at higher secondary level of education, the barriers and supports and how gender plays its role in taking decisions regarding career.

1.2 Objectives

The following are the core objectives of the current study:

- To identify the factors that influence career decisions taken at higher secondary level of education.
- To identify the supporting factors in career decision making at higher secondary level of education.
- To investigate about perceived barriers in pursuing the desired career.
- To explore the role of gender in career decision making at higher secondary level of education.

1.3 Research Questions

Main question:

- What factors influence career decision making of adolescents at higher secondary level of education?

Sub questions:

- Which supporting factors are contributing in career decision making of adolescents at higher secondary level of education?
- What are the barriers that adolescents perceive in career decision making at higher secondary level of education?
- How gender influences career decision making of adolescents at higher secondary level of education?

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

The purpose of this study was to investigate the factors influencing career decision making of adolescents at higher secondary level of education. Grounded theory method was employed to analyze the data. Grounded theory method consists of systematic, inductive guidelines for gathering, synthesizing, analyzing and conceptualizing qualitative data to construct a theory (Charmaz & Mitchell, 2001).

2.2 Sampling Strategy

In the present study, a combination of, purposive, convenient and snow ball sampling strategies was used for sample selection. Students currently completing higher secondary level of education that is Intermediate (F.A, F.Sc. (Pre medical and Pre- Engineering), ICS/ I.Com, General Science) and A-levels (Pre medical Pre- Engineering, Business group and Mixed subjects) from different colleges and schools of Lahore were taken as sample.

2.3 Sample

Adolescent students currently pursuing higher secondary level of education from different schools and colleges of Lahore were taken as sample. N=50 telephonic interviews

were conducted using the semi structured interview schedule out of which 14 interviews providing richness and in-depth information were selected for analysis. The following tables show the characteristics of the sample.

Table1
Gender distribution in interviews (n=14) selected for analysis

	Males	Females
A-levels	5	1
F.Sc	2	2
F.A	-	2
ICS/ I.Com	-	1
General Science	-	1
Total	7	7

Table2
Field wise distribution of interviews (n=14) selected for analysis

	Pre Medical	Pre Engineering	Business Group	Mixed-group	Subject
Alevels	1	1	1	2	
F.Sc	2	2	-	-	
F.A				2	
ICS / I. Com				2	
General Science				1	

2.4 Procedure

Telephonic interviews were conducted using a semi structured interview schedule. Informed consent was taken from the participants regarding the recoding and use of their interviews in the research. A total of (n=50) telephonic interviews were conducted during the months of April, May and June 2012. Based upon the richness and in-depth information provided, from this pool of 50 interviews, 14 interviews were selected for transcription and analysis. Table 1 provides the details of these selected 14 interviews.

Interviews (n=14) that were high on data richness and in depth information were selected for further analysis from the pool of 50 interviews. First, interviews were carefully transcribed and line by line coding was done. Line by line coding is the process of naming each line on each page of the written data. Short and specific codes help define the process in the data. Line by line coding helps the researcher to refrain from imputing his or her own motives, fears and unresolved issues in collected data and its further analysis (Glaser, 1978).

Conceptual categories were then formulated from the codes. This method is useful as it enables the researcher to group similar coded data into categories because of some shared characteristics (Grbich, 2007). Next, abstract ideas or themes were drawn out from these categories. At the end, hypotheses were formulated and a theory was developed.

2.5 Analysis

The data was analyzed through grounded theory method. Grounded theory consists of a set of analytical strategies that are inductive in nature and aim at producing a theory that is rooted directly in the data.

3. Results

The purpose of this study was to investigate the factors influencing career decision making of adolescents at higher secondary level of education in Pakistan. Results are presented in table 3.

In order to look for relationships and connections between the themes, a concept map was drawn. A concept map is a method in qualitative research to represent the concept meanings embedded in the data. Concept maps connect abstract ideas or themes, by linking through words, other themes and ideas that can be considered as linking together. Concept maps are helpful as it allows the researcher to focus on the meaning as well as the connections that the abstract ideas and themes hold across each other.

3.1 Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were generated after careful examination of the themes.

- Preconceived notions about fields are shaped by family influences.
- Preconceived notions about fields are influenced by institutions.
- Preconceived notions about fields are formed by peer influences.
- Institution plays an important role in shaping beliefs.
- Knowledge about ones' self is strengthened by family.
- "Scope" plays an essential role in planning regarding career.
- "Scope" controls market value.
- International system of education has more market value.
- Need for change regarding career decisions involves aspects of gender.
- Choice about international or local system of education is strongly linked with finances.
- Planning related to career is essential for looking towards future.
- Considering market value is an essential part of planning.
- Institution facilitates command on subject matter.
- Planning for career involves finances.
- Family considers gender first when deciding about career

4. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the factors influencing career decision making of adolescents at higher secondary level of education in Pakistan. Grounded theory method was employed to look for factors influencing career decision making of adolescents studying at higher secondary level in Pakistan. Grounded theory method consists of a set of analytical strategies that are inductive in nature and aim at producing a theory that is rooted directly in the data.

There is very limited amount of qualitative research done specifically on career decision making of adolescents. Most of the researches on the related topics see career decision making as a developmental process but very little research was found specifically on adolescents. Career decision making is a topic that needs to be explored in depth through qualitative methods to gain in depth understanding of the phenomenon.

In grounded theory analysis, interview transcripts were first carefully transcribed. Line by line coding was done and later categories were formulated. Through these categories, several themes emerged like; Gender, Family influences and "Scope". A concept map was drawn to take a clear picture of this complex interplay of several factors. Concept map was used to find out the linkages and relationships among the themes. By analyzing the themes several hypotheses were generated and an indigenous theory on career decision making of adolescent students at higher secondary level of education was formed.

From the analysis a total of fifteen themes emerged. These themes are discussed as follows:

4.1 Themes I: "Scope"

In the present research, the first and one of the most prominent themes emerged is "scope". Oxford dictionary (2012) defines scope as the extent of the area or subject matter that something deals with. In career decision context "Scope" refers to the range of possibilities or areas that a field covers. The present study demonstrates that "scope" is considered as one of the attractive features in choosing and deciding about adapting any career in Pakistan. It is being generally observed that in career related discussions, the use of the term "scope" is one of the first things that one may hear. The categories this theme contains are: "scope of other fields not related to formal education", "scope", "desired fields", "international recognition", "use in future" and "weighing scope of here and abroad".

The category "scope of other fields not related to formal education" shows an interest in other fields like sports and media related professions that do not need any formal degree or training but can still be adapted as a career. Analytical process of interviews revealed that these professions can be adapted as 'side professions' but they are not considered as a replacement of a formal degree. The present research points out that adolescents do not feel

that, a person can rely on these professions in financial terms and he or she has to have a formal degree related to science or arts in order to maintain and cope up with changing times.

The second category was named "scope". It depicts that those fields are preferred which have vast research scope and where the opportunities to work and polish ones' abilities increase on a continual basis. With regard to gender it was observed that girls are also performing on a competitive basis with boys and are also performing better than boys. Still, gender plays its part when it comes to decide whether females should practice such professional or not.

The third category this theme contains is "desired fields". This category contains those fields which the participants indicated that they would like to pursue in future. It gave an idea about the trend of field preferences being taken up by the students at higher secondary level of education in Pakistan. This category also shows that adolescents at higher secondary level of education do aim to achieve high and enter professional fields. Most desirable fields mentioned were; ACCA/CA, CSS, Mass Communication/ Journalism, Banks, Cooperate law and Software Engineering.

"International recognition" is the category which depicts that internationally acclaimed institutions are preferred by adolescents studying at higher secondary level in Pakistan. Those institutions and fields have more scope and flourish more which upgrade themselves on international standards.

The fifth category is "use in future". Those fields and courses are preferred and opted for more which have a demand in future. If a student knows that he or she can make use of a subject or a course in his university or can use it as foundation for their career then they prefer to take up those courses or subjects.

Previous literature on career decision making also reveal the consistent finding that fathers as instrumentally supportive and help their daughters make career plans (Mani, 2008). A research participant mentioned:

I picked out economics because it is a career oriented subject.

The last category that this theme holds is "weighing scope of here and abroad". This category indicates that adolescents when taking career related decisions not only look for options available inside Pakistan but also consider applying for universities abroad. At higher secondary level, when there are two educational systems, running parallel to each other it becomes necessary to first opt for one and to evaluate and decide about the line of direction for future. Several other issues are needed to be considered for example, for students doing A-levels, it is preferred that they apply somewhere abroad as it would help them get admission easily as compared to the public universities here in Pakistan. According to British Council Student Insight survey being conducted since 2007, from Pakistan, seventy two percent of the respondents were interested in pursuing overseas study and responded that they have no experience of studying outside their home country.

4.2 Theme II: Family Influences

The second theme that emerged after carefully analyzing categories was "Family influences". Human beings are social animals. Each and every decision that we take is influenced by our society especially our immediate social circle. During the process of data collection, it seemed that there is not much pressure or influence of the family in case of career decisions but when the interviews were carefully coded and analyzed it became evident that family plays the most important role in determining and deciding about the future of adolescents. The categories that fall under this theme are: "pressure from parents", "freedom of choice", "parental concerns", "family expectations", "motivation from home", "guidance from family" and "generation gap".

The first category "pressure from parents" shows that there is certain type of pressure from the family especially from parents to opt for certain fields. Parents in Pakistan, have control over all the important life events of adolescents. From deciding for which school their child should enter, to the career that he or she adapts, to whether the child should practice or

not and to make decisions regarding marriage. Boys are usually given more edge and are considered better decision makers than girls (Haque, 2005). Parents play an important role in the education of children. From the very start of school, they make decisions that affect adolescents' education and careers (Haque, 2005).

We live in a society where if someone is born in a family of doctors then it is naturally expected of him or her to join the same profession. The research results indicate that adolescents studying at higher secondary level of education are often pressurized for gaining marks and for opting for certain subjects. The present research indicates that assertiveness on the part of younger generation plays a key role here. Those who can convince the older generation do get their way out to explore new possibilities and test their abilities.

The category "freedom of choice" ensures us that parents, besides being protective, also give a breathing space to their children when it comes to the choice of career. Parents do voice their opinions and ideas regarding certain careers and fields but let the children take final decisions to choose a career out of the available options. In the present research it was observed that parents want their children to excel in whatever career they choose for themselves.

The third category, "parental concerns" depicts that there are academic as well as environmental concerns from parents. Parents do give freedom of choice to their children but they are also concerned regarding some of the issues. As revealed from the interviews, parents are concerned regarding the general career path that their children take up. Moreover, they are concerned regarding the environment of the institution in which their children are enrolled to get a certain degree.

The present research indicates that mothers are the primary educator of women with regard to the dealing with people in the outside world. This finding is consistent with another study by Mani (2008) which says that mothers are seen as emotionally supportive and help adolescents in coping with interpersonal difficulties in relation with peers and acquaintances.

The category, "family expectations" describes some of the expectations that families, particularly parents have from their children. Sometimes these expectations are related to academics such as getting good marks and excelling in studies. At other times the expectations involve adaptation of future professions like joining in family business. Family, especially parents want their children to not only compete in academics and among their class fellows but also among their cousins and children in the extended family and friends. They expect their children to score higher than their cousins that foster a sense of competition not only at school or college but in ones' extended family as well.

The interviews reveal that it is often the case that families do not allow their children to adapt a certain field or profession but they do so based on some conditions.

The previous researches also indicate that family especially parents do have expectations from their children regarding their careers. Okubo, Yeh, Lin, Fujita, and Shea (2007), conducted a qualitative study on Chinese youth and found that parents' academic and career expectations influenced the career decisions of Chinese youth. In another study Kotrlik and Harrison (1989) asked 3858 high school students about who influenced their career decision making process and found that parents, , especially mothers were the most influential.

"Motivation from home" is an important ingredient of career decision making. Careful analysis of the interviews showed that encouragement and motivation from home and family plays a huge role in career decision process. Adolescents not only perceive what is expected of them but because of encouragement they are also able to get their point across to significant people in the family. It seems like adolescents get confidence in their abilities by getting appreciation and encouragement from family members; particularly parents, siblings and grandparents. Adolescents also like when parents discuss the future prospects of a field, which their children are aiming to pursue. Cenkseven-Önden, Kırdök, and Isik (2010) in their study on parenting styles and career decision making of high schools students found that

neglectful parents who show no interest in their children's' school and career paths , discourage them in their exploratory activities. Thus the child is not able to explore the options available to him and will stuck somewhere in his or her career in future. High school female students, who experience moderate degree of attachment to their mothers, relied on mothers to assist in managing their personal affairs and felt emotionally close to their mothers.

The last but most critical and important category of this theme is " generation gap". Generation gap refers to disagreement, contradiction and divergence in communication from one generation to the next (Sattar, Yasin, Fani, & Afzal, 2010). This study revealed that generation gap is seen where parents are not able to comprehend the choices that their children are making regarding their careers. Data also revealed that in some cases, parents and other family members are not that much educated and even literate to make sense of the importance of career decisions. They are not self-sufficient to discuss the options with their children who are at the stage of making this crucial decision of their life. Despite of that they force their children to join or not to join certain fields on basis of prestige and status.

4.3 Theme III: Influence of Institution

The present study revealed that institution plays an important role in guiding adolescents in making informed career choices. Due to the lack of researches being conducted specifically to Pakistani educational system, it was difficult to predict how and where the institution might play a role in career decision making of adolescents.

This research points out some of the important features of an institution which help adolescents choose and decide when facing a career decision. Categories that fall under this theme are: "availability of career advisor", " course work difficulties", " guidance from faculty", "academic help", " role of head of institution", " institute matters' ".

The sample of the current study demonstrates that career advisor can play an important role in helping students decide about their careers. In recent times, people who do not upgrade themselves and learn new skills cannot cope with the changing times and trends and thus cannot possibly excel in their careers. In a country like Pakistan, the services of career advisor are considered as a luxury and thus are not considered much. In government sector, career advices are mostly given by the principal of the schools, or teachers of schools / colleges and tuition centers. The trend is changing but at a very low rate. Private sector schools are now hiring career advisors and career counselors who can give their expert opinion in career decision making.

The present research demonstrates that schools now make sure that there is a full time career advisor available who not only can advise the students regarding their career paths but also help them in making study plans and overcoming difficult areas.

"Course work difficulties" refer to the various kinds of difficulties that adolescents encounter at higher secondary level of education. Pakistan's education system is not a one unifying system. Schools and colleges are run by the government as well as on private basis. The organizational systems, quality and courses differ in both private and government sector schools and colleges. Thus the difficulties that adolescents face also differ. It is often the case that when a student goes from secondary school to higher secondary, he or she finds new subject that they have not studied before and this is where they find it difficult to cope with the change and thus seek tuitions.

Besides this, there are other problems as well. Teachers need to be trained so that they instill the students to study and follow the right line of direction. From the data it was revealed that mostly in government sector institutes, teachers encourage cramming and thus students suffer because they lack the basic knowledge and clarity of concepts.

This is the point where "guidance from faculty " plays its role. Guidance from faculty members plays an important role in overcoming "course work difficulties". The data revealed that when teachers and faculty members talk about and appreciate a certain field, this helps the students to make impressions of those fields and thus it gets easier for them to take career related decisions.

The category "academic help" refers to various facilities that adolescents get when under going higher secondary level of education. The present research shows that these various kinds of help come from lectures, notes given by teachers and tuitions. Teaching methodology and grading system act as motivators and reinforces students at higher secondary level. Interviews reveal that a fair, just and stable grading system contributes to the satisfaction students get during the process of learning. The research clearly identifies that academies and tuition centers play an important role in providing academic assistance to students.

The category "role of head of institution" describes the inspirational part higher authorities play to help the students decide about their future. The data revealed that principals and other senior staff at schools, colleges and tuition centers help students look for the possible career options and give their expert advice to them. The head of institution also plays a part of mentor to the students and the students look up to their advices in career decision matters. These senior people have the vision to suggest plan Bs if the original plan do not work out due to other related factors.

The next category, "Institute matters" refers to one of the most considered aspects in career decision making in Pakistan. "Institute matters" deals with the prestige of present school, college and the aspired university. "Institute matters" is important to consider because as the time is passing, education is becoming sort of a business. There are very few institutes which can provide quality education along with grooming of the individual. Interviews of adolescents reveal that those field of studies are preferred that are not only prestigious but also introduce new course of studies with changing times.

4.4 Theme IV: Peer Influences

Relationship with peers plays an important role in forming career choices but the study shows that peer influence have little or no effect on the ultimate career decision. The two categories this theme contains are: "studying with friends" and "relationship with friends". These two categories are strongly linked with one another.

Researches being conducted in the past point out that peer relationship also act as emotional supporting agent. When adolescents study along with their peers they provide motivation to each other. The research also suggests that adolescents try to block out difficulties that their peers have, and help them in their careers by keeping their minds positive. It also revealed that adolescents valued and maintained long term relationships and defined their friendships as 'growing' with the passage of time.

The category, "Studying with friends" shows that adolescents do get support from their social circle that also contain friends and acquaintances. Adolescents study in groups and help each other in revising and understanding their course work. Interviews reveal that "studying with friends" will work better if "relationship with friends" is stronger. Adolescence is the age when people spend more time and bond stronger with the people outside family that are their friends and acquaintances. This is the age when they go out and meet new people thus eventually they expect more from friends and acquaintances than from within the family. The following extract from an interview will help to understand this relationship more clearly:

4.5 Theme V: Planning

Nothing great can ever be achieved without proper planning. Planning is an essential part in career decision process. At higher secondary level of education, the plans a person makes regarding his or her career can either be short term or long term plans. These plans can either relate to a person's academic career or they may be job related.

The categories this theme contains are: "doing homework about desired work place", "Plan Bs", short term planning and decision making", "distinction between here and abroad", "long term planning for university" and "switching fields".

"Doing homework about desired workplace" refers to the gathering of information about the occupation its self and the pros and cons of actually being in the field. From the interviews it was quite clear that adolescents at an early stage become aware of their

responsibilities and know that they have to carry their values to work. They are cautious and aware of the many fraudulent issues that might be involved at the place where they find work in future. Adolescents at an early stage, seek information about the work place where they are aiming to work in future.

"Plan Bs" indicate about the alternate or substitute plans in career decision process. Interviews reveal that adolescents make alternate plans if the original ones do not work out. From the interviews it was evident that the alternate plans seem to vary across both genders. For males, alternate or substitute plans constitute trying out a different field or joining in family business. As for females, the alternate plans also included staying home, getting married and looking after children.

A study being conducted in Sukkur area of Pakistan reveals that parents perceive their daughters education to be conducive in running house affairs and growing children with care. Some of the parents view their daughters' education to be good for their marriage in good families (Bhutto, Narejo, Butt, Shaikh, & Virwani, 2011).

"Short term planning and decision making" refers to the small decisions that adolescents encounter with when they are studying at higher secondary level. As there are two mainstream education systems running parallel to each other in Pakistan, this research reveals that students first decide for which education system they would go for. Finances or the socio economic status of family play an important role here. Having done this, they are faced with the choice of course of study. There are some who have pre decided about the choice of subjects and they base their decision on either financial basis or interest. The results indicate that minor supports from family and institution play an important role in these type decisions.

"Distinction between here and abroad", deals with taking career while considering both options of either studying in Pakistan or taking up the external programs or studying abroad going abroad. It relates to the differences felt in getting a degree from a foreign university or local university. Research results suggest that adolescents do perceive differences in "market value" of both the degrees but no craze of getting a foreign degree was indicated. As said by one of the participant:

I don't plan to study abroad or practice abroad; I'll come back here and practice here.

"Long term planning for university", refers to the long range plans about ones' career. This category involves planning to get into a university and aiming to get a degree. Considering one's own choices and interests and then applying for the program at universities. "Long term planning for university" do not only deal with the academic or the career dimension of a person's life but it also deals with the grooming and the whole process of making oneself groomed and ready to face the challenges of the world of work.

Another category that lies under this theme is "switching fields". "switching fields" relates to "plan Bs" in that "switching fields" relates more to the context of changing ones area of further studies or specialization. The present research reveals that adolescents have set certain standards and are often influenced and sometimes pressurized by family to get into more aspired fields like medicine or engineering. But not everyone is able to get into prestigious colleges for these degrees. This research points out that adolescents consider changing their fields when they fail to get into medical or engineering college. The data also indicates that adolescents find it easier to switch to a related field than to something they have no idea about.

4.6 Theme VI: Gender

From the literature review, it became quite clear that gender will definitely effect how career decisions are taken up in Pakistani culture. Pakistani society which is closely tied to its centuries old customs and traditions puts restrictions to the right of choice for women. The categories that fall in this theme are "marriage" and "gender biases in career selection".

"Marriage" is one of an important phases of one's life. It starts life in a new direction. In Pakistani culture and society, for females, marriage is considered as a hindrance to career.

The interviews reveal that females, perceive that getting married will definitely affect their career in a negative way and that their career will come to a halt. Elements of uncertainty and confusion regarding career were found when the topic of marriage was brought into the interview. Females are confused whether in future, their in- laws would allow them to practice or not if they earn a professional degree. Support from husband was highlighted as a major support for career of women.

“Gender biases in career selection” is the next category in this theme. From the interviews it became clear that to some extent there is a change in the way society is viewing female education and career building. Some of the interviews reveal that the trend is changing and people are now getting more open minded and liberal about the choice of career. Still there are many instances when gender of a student is first considered while deciding for the choice of subject or choosing which field would be suitable for them.

4.7 Theme VII: Knowing About One’s self

“Knowing about one’s self” is another important theme of this research. In order to advance in career it is important that a person knows his or her abilities, strengths and weaknesses. This themes contains the following categories; “ knowing self”, “ confidence”, “ autonomy”, “matter of interest” and “ depending on one’s own self”. These categories are interlinked with one another and affect each other in career decision making process.

“Knowing self” refers to knowledge about ones’ own self and abilities. The present research indicates that knowledge about ones abilities helps in efficient decision making. Adolescents who know what they ultimately want make decisions easily than those who were unsure about themselves. Knowing about ones’ own self helps the adolescents in getting their point across and makes them confident about themselves and their decisions. “Confidence” is an important element in getting to know about ones’ abilities and strengths. It not only means being confident in having something but also feeling confident and trusting that whatever a person will choose to do will eventually prove to have some good impact on his or her career.

“Autonomy” refers to the independence of an individual. Adolescence is the age when a person starts to think and act upon his or her own choices and takes his or her own decisions. This not only gives him confidence but he or she also experiences the different world views and forms his or her own world view as well. This confidence helps him in getting independent not only in monetary terms but also in thinking in new dimensions.

The next category that falls in the theme “ knowledge about ones’ self” is “ matter of interest”. This category refers to an important feature of career decision making. Interest is one of the most important lines on which a decision is made. If a person is interested enough in pursuing a certain field, it is more likely that he or she will excel more than when engaging in a non-interesting profession. The present research suggests that if a subject is interesting enough it is likely that the student will score high on that subject and ultimately will take that as his or her career “ Depending on one’s own self” is the next category which refers to the autonomy and independence that an individual has over his or her career decision process. It also refers to the responsibility that adolescents feel towards their career choice.

4.8 Theme VIII: Beliefs

After carefully analyzing the interviews, another very interesting theme emerged that was named “ beliefs”. This theme refers to the generally held beliefs by adolescents regarding their career decisions. The categories under this theme are; “ belief on luck”, “ belief on hard work and creativity and “belief regarding favorite subject and good score”.

“Belief on luck” refers to a general belief that career related happenings are based on luck. The following statements of respondents make help us understand this category clearly:

**Looking for our mystery and planning for ourselves.
Random stroke of luck**

Contrary to the previous category related to luck and mystery, the next category, “belief on hard work and creativity” refers to a strong faith on hard work and bringing novelty

to your work. The present research points out a belief of adolescents that hard work does pay off sooner or later. It also depicts the view point of today's generation of Pakistan which believes that hard work is the only way to success.

The category, "belief regarding favorite subject and good score" is popular among adolescents. This belief relates to the interest of an individual in a certain field, subject or area of study. It refers to a general phenomenon that good score automatically means likeness for subject or vice versa.

4.9 Theme IX: Need for Change

Another important theme "need for change" emerged after careful analysis of the data. This theme constitutes "needs" and "attitudes that need change".

"Needs" refers to certain requirements of adolescents in career decision making process. Making career decisions is a complex process and therefore there are various kinds of requirements that need to be fulfilled. These needs have been identified by adolescents and covers wide range of topics.

The next category, "attitudes that need change" points out some of the attitudes prevailing in society relating gender and career. The present research indicates that there are certain attitudes in society that need to be modified. These social attitudes point out certain flaws in the society like forcing children to pursue certain fields just because those specific fields are considered prestigious and are counted as status symbol among families.

4.10 Theme X: Finances

Finances are an integral part of career building process. The present research shows that although finances are important but they are not very much highlighted during the interviews. The respondents just replied in short regarding finances and not much attention was given to this factor. "Money matters" is the category under this theme which deals with various kinds of financial concerns and issues that adolescents face during their educational process at higher secondary level. It was observed that the basic decision of choosing between international or local system of education involves finances.

4.11 Themes XI: Command on Subject Matter

The next theme in the present research came out to be "command on subject matter". This theme deals with, "subjects", "experience with subjects", "knowhow of subject" and "exposure". Institution seems to play an important role in making adolescents comfortable with subjects. All the categories included under this theme are interlinked with one another.

"Subjects" is the first category of this theme. Pakistan has predominantly two educational systems running parallel to each other. Both of these systems offer more or less same subjects but the content varies. These may include Sciences; in the programs of pre medical and pre engineering, Languages; some of the languages are compulsory to study while some are elective. Humanities and arts contain subjects like psychology, philosophy, fine arts and economics. Commerce deals with business related groups for example, accounting and finance.

"Experience with subjects" deals with the general feeling about subjects. Whether someone finds the subject easy, difficult, challenging or thrilling all is linked with how well as person knows about a subject and how his or her institution is facilitating in getting to know the subject well.

"Knowhow of subject" deals with knowing the subject well. The present research shows that adolescents, at higher secondary level know the subject well when they have some kind of exposure to it outside the academia or they have studied the subject before in metric or O-levels.

In the present research, "exposure" refers to the experience of dealing with a subject. This research indicated that adolescents need guidance whenever they are studying a new subject or doing something for the first time. It also indicated that exposure leads to more

confidence in ones' abilities and if students have daily exposure to the materials or gadgets they also enjoy studying about them at college.

4.12 Theme XII: Looking towards Future

"Looking towards future" is an important element of career decision making process. The present study demonstrates that future is linked with planning, "scope", and finances. For an outlook on future, planning is essential, one has to plan everything including finances properly and efficiently and to gather information about "scope" and market value of the field one aspires to enter. "looking towards future" includes, "apprehensions" and "long term planning for university"

"Apprehensions" involve certain fears and anxieties that one has related to his or her career. These fears can be related to the present day fears for example, not performing well on exam, getting bullied, being unable to make friends. They can also be related to the upcoming problems in future like, getting a degree that offers limited jobs, not being able to manage business.

"Long term planning for university" is the next category that falls under this theme. This category deals with the long range plans of getting into a university and pursuing a degree. The present research suggests that adolescents when studying at higher secondary level do have a vague idea in mind about the degree they want to pursue as their career. "Long term planning for university" deals with setting priorities and goals and look for university rankings. Taking advises from influential people is also a part of "long term planning for university".

4.13 Theme XIII: Market Value

After careful analysis of the data, another theme named as "market value" emerged. Oxford dictionary (2012) defines market value as "the amount for which something can be sold on a given market". In the context of career decision making, "market value" refers to the worth of skills that a person acquires over a period of time. This research demonstrates that in career decision context market value is closely tied to planning and "scope" of an aspired field or profession. Adolescents at higher secondary level of education, plan their careers while keeping in mind the market value of a field they want to pursue. Market value is one of the attractive features of any field. This theme contains the following categories; "openness and diversity", "information about workplace issues", "information search about careers through internet". All these categories are included under this theme because they help to determine the market value of a field that an adolescent plans or wishes to pursue.

"Openness and diversity" refers to the variety of courses an adolescent gets the chance to study. It is one of the attractive features of a degree. The more open and diverse the field is, the more will be its "scope" and the better will be the exposure of students. From the present research it has become clear that those fields are opted more which offer mixture of choices so that the student not only come to know about their field only but also know something about other fields as well. The research reveals that these days, universities and many other multinational organizations prefer to take those candidates who had taken up varied combination of courses rather than the stereotypical combinations.

"Information about workplace issues" refers to the different problems and happenings at ones' workplace. In the present research it was observed that adolescents do have an idea about different problems that can arise in their professional lives and the areas where they work. It was seen that despite of getting professional education and studying in co-education, they still lack behind the skill for public dealing in practical life.

"Information search about careers through internet" is another major aspect in determining the market value of a profession. According to Internet World Stats data (2012), about 15.5% of total population of Pakistan use internet for different purposes. With the advent of technology in this region, people in general have started to upgrade themselves and now internet is a necessity for people from all walks of life. From researchers, professors, students and housewives, internet is a daily feature of every ones' life.

4.14 Theme XIV: International and Local System of Education

The theme 'International and local system of education' emerged because in Pakistan, there are two education systems running side by side at higher secondary level. One is the Cambridge system (A- Level) and other is local Intermediate system. Both the systems seem to divide Pakistani population, into two groups primarily based on the purchasing power. The present research reveals that those who can afford to get internationally recognized education do O/A levels but due to certain factors they switch to the local Pakistani education system. This theme contains different aspects revolving around international education system in Pakistan and local education system. The categories included under this theme are; 'Reasons for switching from O-levels to Intermediate', 'Methodology differences experienced when switching from O-levels to Intermediate', 'Examination differences experienced when switching from O-levels to Intermediate', 'Entry test issues'.

The first category, 'Reasons for switching from O-levels to Intermediate', deals with the basic reasons for which adolescents switch from international to local system. The present study highlights that despite doing O-level, some may prefer to study at the local education system of Pakistan. The reasons being, limited number of institutes that offer A- levels and the institute that do offer have high fee structures. Equivalence issue is another problem that A-level students face when applying to public sector universities. Adolescents, when they decide to apply at any public sector university need an equivalence certificate.

Another embedded category of this theme is 'entry test issues'. If a student is interested to pursue his or her further education in Pakistan and that too in a public university, then after A-levels he or she has to go through the entire course of Intermediate (F.Sc) to pass the admission test.

The next difference that A-levels students face after switching from O-level to intermediate is the difference in teaching methodology. 'Methodology differences experienced when switching from O-levels to Intermediate' is the next category of this theme. The Cambridge system of education and the local Pakistani system differ in great deal when it comes to curriculum and teaching methodology.

This highlights the need to bring changes to the curriculum and to initiate teacher training programs for the faulty at primary to higher secondary level of education.

The next category, 'Examination differences experienced when switching from O-levels to Intermediate' also points out some of the differences being experienced by adolescents who have switched from international to local system.

4.15 Theme XV: Preconceived Notions about Fields

The last theme of this research is 'preconceived notions about fields'. This theme relates to the perceptions or beliefs that are prevalent in Pakistani society. These notions can be due to impression of certain professions that are imprinted in people's mind for a very long period of time. These notions and perceptions of fields are shaped by family and peers. As indicated in theme II, Family plays an important role in career decision making of adolescents. Family is the primary source for adolescents for support and for formation of perceptions of fields. The categories under this theme are: 'impression of fields', 'General thinking regarding available supports' and 'General thinking regarding courses taken'.

The first category 'Impression of fields', deals with the general thinking about fields that has been formed over years in Pakistani society. This category depicts that there is an element of idealization about fields and professions which makes adolescents adapt that field.

'General thinking regarding courses taken' is the next category which again highlights the notions about fields and courses that adolescents take up at higher secondary level of education. This study reveals that professions in science or related to science are considered worth spending on and worth pursuing. Adolescents opting for other courses like arts and humanities are considered less intelligent and thus are called with the name 'nikmma' (نکمه).

The next category of this theme is, "General thinking regarding available supports". This category contains the supports that adolescents have during their course of higher secondary education. Interviews reveal that social support gives adolescents confidence.

5. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the factors influencing career decision making of adolescents at higher secondary level of education. One of the major decisions of life is to choose and decide for a career. In Pakistan, not enough research has been conducted in this regard. The present study was qualitative in nature and aimed at developing a career decisions theory which is indigenous to Pakistani culture and society. Grounded theory method was employed to analyze the data. Fifteen themes emerged after carefully analyzing and coding the transcribed data. These themes are: "scope", "family influences", "influence of institution", "peer influences", "planning", "gender", "knowledge about ones' self", "beliefs", "need for change", "Finances", "command on subject matter", "looking towards future", "market value", "international and local system of education", "preconceived notions about fields". These themes indicate the factors that influence career decision making of Pakistani adolescents at higher secondary level of education.

5.1 Implications

This study will be useful in both basic and applied areas of research. The theory emerged though this study is indigenous theory of career decision making focusing solely on the career decision making of Pakistani adolescents at higher secondary level of education. This study will help professional career counselors, policy makers and researchers to formulate effective counseling and guidance plans, design student friendly policies and highlight what needs to be done for making informed career choices.

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